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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PRAGUE 000747

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SUBJECT: PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE CZECH POLICY TOWARD IRAN, AND
CZECH OBSERVATIONS ON EU AND IRAN

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years been attracted by the possibility of lucrative contracts for Czech firms involved in such services. (Hybaskova has also been critical of outgoing PM Paroubek for allegedly being more concerned about potential exports of Czech trolley cars than non-proliferation threats, although admits that this has not had any impact on actual Czech policies towards Iran.)

Czechs Paint a Discouraging Picture of the EU and Iran

16. (C) Several Czech diplomats and observers present a somewhat pessimistic image of a dissolute EU that is unable (and to some extent unwilling) to effectively face the Iranian nuclear issue. MFA Security Policy Director Petr Kaiser told Poloff that the vanguard position of the EU3 countries has allowed other EU members to effectively disengage from this difficult and contentious issue. He said the structure of various EU meetings and conferences on the issue had simply consisted of the EU3 countries briefing other states. According to Kaiser, with the EU demanding, at most, a passive acquiescence to the EU3 policy direction, many states have been willing to adopt more detached and circumspect attitudes toward Iran and rely the U.S. and its EU3 partners to move the issue forward, with all of the potential difficulties that such progress will entail. Kaiser stated that, along with the Czechs, he considered Holland, Poland, and Slovakia the most assertive and the most constructive non-EU3 partners on the issue.

17. (C) Conservative MEP Jana Hybaskova essentially mirrored Kaiser's bleak picture of the EU in a separate discussion. According to Hybaskova, many EP members are woefully uninformed on the issue and unduly influenced and buffeted by currents of opinion, some either inaccurate or irrelevant to the debate. Several of Hybaskova's colleagues, for example, emerged from meeting with the Iranian Ambassador in Brussels parroting the ambassador's line that "Iran only has low-enriched uranium for power plants, not highly enriched uranium needed for weapons"; they were evidently either unaware or unconcerned that the enrichment process is the same for both types. She also indicated that a significant number of her colleagues maintained ties and conducted events with representatives of PMOI/Mek (People's Movement of Iran/Mujahedin e Khalq) from Paris. Domestic politics within

member states also exert a heavy influence on EP views of Iran. Although many MEPs have been galvanized by Ahmadenejad,s fiery recent rhetoric (Hybaskova was gathering MEP signatures on a petition to at least symbolically declare the Iranian President persona non grata in advance of the World Cup in Germany), both Hybaskova and Kaiser stated that the Iran crisis would "demand U.S. leadership."

Some General Czech Views of Iran

¶8. (C) During the course of our discussions with Czech officials working on Iran, several took the opportunity to pass on reports and impressions from their staff in Tehran, and also other general MFA impressions of Iran. Although the Czech Republic is a small country, their long-term commercial and diplomatic presence in Iran, their prowess in civil and nuclear engineering, and their status as a proactive and aggressive USG partner on security issues help frame their views. On Iran, as with other security matters, the Czechs fight well above their weight class.

¶9. (C) THE INDIA EXAMPLE. Ludvik Mrazek from the MFA Department of Middle Eastern and African Affairs expressed a sentiment, based upon his close work the Iranians in the past, that Iran had drawn some counterproductive conclusions from the example of India. In Iran,s view, India,s defiant nuclear tests of 1998, far from carrying any substantial penalties, have helped India emerge into the top tier of regional and even global leaders. Iran views India's emergence as a fully declared nuclear power as critical to Indian economic and diplomatic achievements in recent years. While supportive of recent USG initiatives involving the Indian nuclear program, GOCR officials have also privately expressed concern about the initiative,s effect on the global nonproliferation regime. They see in Iran a strong illustration of their apprehensions.

¶10. (C) IRAN,S PUBLIC AND THE NUCLEAR ISSUE. According to Petr Kaiser, the Czech Charge, in Tehran presents an image to the GOCR of an Iranian public strongly supportive of their country's nuclear ambitions. The Iranians see themselves as a historically important power with a destiny to assume a leadership position in the region; nuclear power - and even nuclear weapons - are inseparable from that status.

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Discouragingly, the Czech mission related that even relatively liberal and reformist elements of Iranian society share the conviction that Iran has an unquestioned right to a full nuclear program. While some Iranians may see the drive to enhance their nuclear capabilities unwise, provocative, or a poor use of resources, virtually none see the effort itself as illegitimate. In the Czech view, looking for political space with which to divide different elements of the Iranian body politic on the nuclear issue will be a challenging task.

¶11. (C) INTERNAL STRUGGLES AND THE STABILITY OF THE IRANIAN REGIME. Czech diplomats, including both Mrazek and the Czech Charge, in Tehran, while mindful of the support the government has on the nuclear issue, are not as certain of the overall stability of the Ahmadenejad regime. The Czech Mission in Teheran sees Ahmadenejad producing a significant change in the upper echelons of the government and directly challenging the established interests of the clerical establishment. In this view, Ahmadenejad is surrounding himself with his former colleagues from within Revolutionary Guards Corps, the intelligence and security services, and the military. Their background and expertise lie within the national security apparatus, and their formative experiences were the brutal internal and external struggles surrounding the Iran-Iraq War. The Czechs see in Teheran signs of veiled clashes between the conservative clerics who have ruled Iran since the Revolution and Ahmadenejad,s &New Guard8 of former security officials. They consider the likely result

to be more such hidden power struggles and, along with them,
significantly reduced flexibility in negotiations involving
nuclear issues.

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